

WOMEN AND RELIGION

AUGUST 1979

On Way to Promised Land

'Women in Religion' Looks to Future

by Patty Smith, Co-Director, Women in Religion

WOMEN AND RELIGION are still on their way to the Promised Land. Two summer breakfasts have brought us together to affirm that, indeed, WOMEN AND RELIGION is future-oriented.

This information-filled newsletter will quickly bring everyone up-to-date on just what opportunities lie directly ahead -- more breakfasts, a six-week study program, a luncheon, and a November Retreat. The breakfasts do not require pre-registration, but the study program, the luncheon, and the retreat do require pre-registration. Please register early -- forms are available on the back page of this issue.

Just as we had hoped, new persons are joining in, filling in old jobs and creating new ones. At the September breakfast, we hope to receive comments about our proposed Articles of Association to move toward their adoption. By the October breakfast, we hope to move toward forming a new Steering Committee.

Church ERA Supporters to Organize

Arizonans of Faith for the ERA, a coalition of women which began in Phoenix, will seek to organize Tucson women at a brown bag luncheon on September 8th, following the regularly scheduled study breakfast at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, 3809 E. 3rd St.

The Rev. Holly Beaumont (Disciples of Christ), Betty Atchison (Presbyterian), and Norma Farris (Methodist), organized the coalition in Phoenix and hope to develop coalitions in Flagstaff and Tucson to work toward the ratification of the ERA in Arizona. Elaine Baarson is in charge of the Tucson luncheon.

Those interested in attending must make reservations for the \$2 brown bag lunch by September 1st. (See reservation form on back page.)

All of these topics raise real questions about the meaning and means of WOMEN AND RELIGION to all of us. Will WOMEN AND RELIGION provide a real place for faith seeking, faith sharing, and faith enactment? The answer to those questions will come from persons saying "yes" with us by attending the upcoming events. Let us see you there or hear from you.

Seminary May Offer Program

Applications are now being received for the M.A. in Values program, an external graduate degree program for laity, offered by San Francisco Theological Seminary. This is the first time that this fully accredited degree program has been offered in Tucson. People from many professions are finding this program of interest.

The M.A. in Values program is designed for working adults. Courses are scheduled on weekends once a month for a year, in a small group of 10-12 students. There is no residency requirement; all of the course work will be done in Tucson. The sequence of nine courses is taught by San Francisco Theological Seminary professors and adjunct faculty. An externship involving application of the coursework to the student's professional situation, 12 additional units taken in local colleges and universities, and a Thesis/Project, are other components of the program.

Bulletins and application forms are available from Marguerite Bowden, 3809 E. 3rd St., Tucson 85716.

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Campus Minister to Lead Study Group on Choices

The Choice Maker by Elizabeth B. Hawes and Sheila Moon will serve as the common focus for a series of five session experimental study groups facilitated by the Rev. Barbara Smith, campus minister at the U of A.

One group will meet on Tuesday evenings from September 18th - October 16th, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. at the Campus Christian Center, 715 North Park Avenue. A second group will meet on Thursday mornings from September 20th - October 18th, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, 3809 E. 3rd Street. Child care will be available at the morning group.

"As the group journeys together, considering the fast scope of questions, the purpose will be to bring clarity in seeing ourselves as responsible choice makers," according to the Rev. Smith. "This is our God given privilege for ourselves and our world."

Next Breakfast September 8

Nivita Riley Yothemont will provide the leadership as women address the question WHAT KIND OF PRIESTHOOD? at the third "Unpacking the Packets" breakfast, which will be held at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, 3809 E. 3rd Street, on September 8th at 8:00 AM.

Ann Braff will provide the leadership for the October 13th breakfast on FEMININE IMAGES IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE, and Frankie Oliver will be in charge of the discussion on ARENAS OF ACTION, WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN CHURCHES, AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE for the November 10th meeting. On December 8th, the group will focus on RELIGIOUS VALUES AND WOMEN'S ROLES.

No reservations for the breakfast meetings are required, however the cost will be \$1 at the door for coffee and doughnuts.



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ARE YOU SURE GLORIA STEINEM
STARTED THIS WAY?

The authors of The Choice Makers are psychologists in the Jungian tradition and have led seminars in the combined fields of religion, analytical psychology, art and mythology.

Cost of the groups will be \$5 per person for the five sessions, plus \$4.50 per person for the book. Registration is due September 1st. (See registration form on back page.)

Retreat on Advent Set for Rio Rico

THIS MUCH IS READY NOW is the theme of the Women in Religion Advent Retreat scheduled for November 16th and 17th at the Rio Rico resort south of Tucson.

Sister Barbara Sullivan, who is in charge of the program, notes that this is an invitation to give yourself a Christmas gift early -- a gift of time and space away. She says, "Advent begins with a Woman's Yes. Yes yourself to an experience, alone and with others, to explore where, why, and how you are in your life of continual birthing of yourself."

The cost of the retreat is \$30 per person, double occupancy, for the food and facilities of the resort hotel. The retreat will begin with dinner Friday night, includes breakfast and lunch Saturday, and will end Saturday afternoon. Reservations are due November 1st. (See reservation form on back page.)

Conference Tapes Now Available

Audio cassette tapes of the WOMEN IN RELIGION conference are now available and may be ordered for \$5 per cassette from Women and Religion, 3809 East 3rd Street, Tucson, AZ 85716.

The six cassettes available are:

1. Dr. Letty Russell - "Women and Religion, Biblical Authority"
2. Dr. Rosemary Ruether - "Women and Religion, Past, Present and Future"
3. Dr. Peter Machinist - "Women and Judaism: Continuity and Change", Dr. Constance McGovern - "Arenas of Action: Women and the American Churches, an Historical Perspective", and Dr. Mary Thornberry - "Justice, Power and Equity: Legal and Biblical Concepts".
4. Dr. Delwin Brown - "Women in the Writing of St. Paul"
5. Dr. Susan Aiken - "Feminine Images in Biblical Literature", and Dr. J. L. Cowan - "Religious Values and Women's Roles"
6. Dr. Rosemary Rader - "The Role of Women in the Development of Christian Friendship"

Interview Follows Conference

Ruether, Russell Comment on Women's Issues

Scripture and the Judeo-Christian traditions are frequently used to argue against the equality of women and their full participation in the church and in society. Last March at the "Women and Religion" Conference held in Tucson, Ariz., two leading Christian theologians refuted those arguments and spoke out on a number of issues dealing with women and religion today. Dr. Letty Mandeville Russell, Presbyterian, Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, and Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Roman Catholic, Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology at United Methodist-related Garrett Evangelical Theological School offered these responses to Sharon Mielke of The United Methodist Reporter--Editor.

Q: If Scriptures are male-centered as most persons seem to agree, how can women find meaning in them?

A: Dr. Russell: The Bible has authority in my own life because it makes sense of my own personal experience, it speaks to me about my humanity in Jesus Christ, it is the story of God's love-affair with the world and describes God's new creation.

In God's sight nobodies can be somebodies; in God's sight I am not marginalized as a woman - not second-class - but called to become what God intends me to become.

The Word of God is liberating, but the Word also needs liberation from androcentric, male-centered interpretations. The key problem is how to deal faithfully and creatively with those traditions.

Q: How do you deal with a long tradition of Biblical interpretation and theology that does not include women except in second-class roles?

A: Dr. Ruether: A new synthesis is needed and I find it in the Biblical tradition. First, a fundamental judgment has to be made about what the essential meaning of scripture is - the norm in scripture itself which determines that some texts are more authoritative than others.

For me this norm is the prophetic norm with its struggle against false religion and injustices, against religious hypocrisy and the use of religion to oppress people.

For example, by the biblical norm, the passage in which St. Paul says that liberation in Jesus Christ overcomes all divisions between men and women, slave and free is more authoritative than his statement that women should keep silent in church. Women were included equally in the spiritual gifts and prophetic powers enunciated in the New Testament; slaves and women operated as leaders in the Early Church. But, the Early Church was unable to encompass the radical implications of this in its own life and fell back on tradition - it backed into reactionary patterns. The theme of equality in Christ didn't completely disappear but got "kicked upstairs," with men and women equal only as angels or celibates who transcend sexuality.

Q: What is to keep the women's movement from riding roughshod over tradition?

A: Dr. Russell: First of all there is the Biblical Tradition (with a capital T) - which is not static but dynamic - the description of God's action in the world. And then there are traditions (with a small t) which have grown up in cultures and denominations - "what happens after you have a strawberry festival the second year."

I feel compelled to struggle with the Biblical texts and with the answers others have found, but I do not feel compelled to accept the answers others found - at least until I can test them out in my own experience.

I believe the Bible still speaks, but the last word has not been said. The Bible provides clues for our life but not answers. Tradition tends to cut off the process, but the important thing to keep in mind is Tradition with the capital T. That is a guide.

Q: What is wrong with believing men and women are born to separate, complementary roles?

A: Dr. Ruether: Both sexes have the capacity for wholeness. The wholeness of two people with each committed to helping each other to wholeness is far better than two people fostering each other's dependencies.

Psychic condition - which is embedded in our socio-economic system - is the issue. Both men and women have two sides to their brains. In the right side are the capacities for sensitivity, the artistic, intuition, and in the left side are the capacities for the rational, logical, mathematical, etc.

Men and women are conditioned to develop one side or the other as society has prepared them for certain roles, but we must be liberated from the nonsense of psychic dualism which says that because of one's sex one has only half a brain.

Q: Why should Christian feminists be concerned about other issues such as racism and homosexuality? Why not stick to eliminating sexism?

A: Dr. Ruether: Sexism is a substructure in every race and class. The women's movement cannot allow itself to be co-opted by the white middle-class. That is what happened in the late 19th century when the suffrage movement sold out and became essentially racist and classist. In order to succeed, it failed. Feminism that talks about sexism as the only oppression will be elitist - limited to the white middle-class because those women are the only ones to feel that oppression alone.

Q: What about the relative importance of language?

A: Dr. Russell: People who say language isn't important are merely expressing their view which is that language isn't hurting them. Others find exclusive language is a hindrance. Persons who don't think language is important should be willing to change so all will feel comfortable. The real issue for the church is how to express its teachings so they can be heard by everyone.

STUDY GROUP - A JOURNEY INTO CHOICE MAKING

REGISTRATION DUE SEPTEMBER 1

Enclosed is my check for \$9.50 for course and book The Choice Makers.

Will attend group on Sept. 18-Oct. 16, 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Campus Christian Center, 715 North Park Avenue, Tucson.

Will attend group on Sept. 20-Oct. 18, 9:00a.m. to 11:30a.m. at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, 3809 E. 3rd St. Child care provided.

Name _____

Address _____

Mail to: Women and Religion, 3809 E. 3rd Street, Tucson, Arizona 85716

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E. R. A. LUNCHEON SEPTEMBER 8th.

Name _____

Address _____

Enclosed is my check for \$2.00 for brown bag lunch.

Mail to: Women and Religion, 3809 E.3rd. Street. Tucson, Arizona 85716

Deadline: SEPTEMBER 1st.

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REGISTRATION DUE NOVEMBER 1st.

I will attend the RIO RICO RETREAT
November 16th. - 17th.

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Enclosed is my check for \$30.00.

Mail to: Women and Religion,
3809 E.3rd. St. Tucson, Az.85716.



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